



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector Lake Michigan

November 18, 2025
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Findings of Concern 014- 25

IMPROVING PIER SAFETY: PIER INSPECTIONS AT WATERFRONT FACILITIES

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. A U.S. flagged freight vessel suffered a hull breach to a fuel tank, resulting in the discharge of approximately 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel into Lake Michigan. The breach, roughly the size of a quarter, was located on the vessel's starboard side. A temporary patch was applied to halt the discharge until permanent repairs could be completed. The subsequent investigation revealed that the probable cause of the hull breach was an exposed lag bolt (Figure 1) located on the working pier structure below the waterline at the vessel's last mooring location. At the time of the incident, neither the vessel crew nor the facility personnel were aware of the pier's hazardous condition.



Figure 1: Remote operated vehicle photo of the submerged, protruding lag bolt.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. Working piers where vessels routinely moor may pose safety hazards that can negatively impact commercial vessels. If left unaddressed, these hazards can create significant risks to life, property, and the marine environment, as well as cause widespread disruptions to the marine transportation system.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators identified the following recommended action to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Waterfront facility operators are encouraged to regularly inspect all areas, with particular emphasis on piers and pier faces. Pier inspections should cover areas above and below the waterline to ensure no hazardous or unsafe conditions exist that could potentially breach a vessel's hull during mooring and cargo transfer operations.

Closing. These Findings of Concern are for informational purposes only and do not relieve any entity or party of domestic or international safety, regulatory, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact the Sector Lake Michigan Investigation Division by phone at 414-747-7137 or via email at SMBSECLMichCommand@uscg.mil.